Lise Arsenault, Teresa and Nancy McDonnell...

Travelling, training, dieting: three gymnasts prepare for Montreal

Canada will be hosting the Olympics; Montreal is the site for the 1976 games. While construction in the Quebec metropolis lags behind, three York gymnasts have been in

For the first time in history, training for nearly as long as der to make the grade? Mayor Jean Drapeau has been

Olympic athletes must make in or- cellence?

scheming to bring the amateur relate to people and what kind of York students who have gained an What are the sacrifices that make in the pursuit of athletic ex-

In this article, Teresa and Nancy At that time, the 36 best gymnasts in financial hardships must they international reputation in gym-

the world will be chosen from the Where do they find time to McDonnell and Lise Arsenault, three estimated 150 competing. two or three places. This year, the nastics, tell us why they do what

Olympics are in Canada and we're going to do it. It's certainly my goal as their coach," says Folprecht. Are York students aware these

Olympic hopefuls are on campus? As Physical Education majors. the girls are well known at Tait McKenzie. As far as the rest of the York Community is concerned, the girls really don't know. Perhaps the question to pose is, "Are the gymnasts aware of York?"

"We've always missed that list by

Teresa, the elder McDonnell sister, admits she's missed a lot at the University. "I really feel out of it. Like last Thursday. It was Varsity night and all three of us received personal invitations. Of course we had to miss it. Things like this upset me, but you learn to get

Passing up social activities is just one adjustment the Olympic athlete has to make. But the results are worth it. At the Canadian Winter Games in 1967, Teresa captured one silver, five gold medals and was named best all round gymnast. A At the last Canadian Gymnastics career which started at age 12 has Championships, they finished one- led to her participation in both the two-three, and all three are York '68 and '72 Olympics, the North American Games in '69, the World Games in 1970 and the 1971 Pan American Games.

In 1974, Teresa was among the Canadian athletes who toured China. (She still recollects how the Chinese wondered at her blonde hair.) Her coach describes her as extremely shy but at the 1972 World Competition in Bulgaria, she was chosen Miss Gymnast. Marie adds, "If she expressed herself more, everyone would fall in love with her." Teresa admits to her shyness. "It bothers me and it's been hard when I've had to make speeches and

COACHING DANGER

But in interviews, she's more talkative. She cites travelling, discipline and the emotional side of competition as her most valuable

"After all the disciplining, you In the past, the Canadian Gym- become more independent and are nastics Team has done poorly in better able to cope with all sorts of mediate goal for next summer is not can be carried to a limit. Some to win medals. First, they want to `athletes can be destroyed by a make that critical list formed on the coach's reaction. Luckily ours are

photos by C.T. SGUASSERO

When Nancy watched four fellow club members training for the 1968 Mexico Olympics, she knew she wanted to compete also. "If they could do it, I knew I could." She certainly has kept to her

promise. Nancy was the Ontario Gymnastics Champion in 1973 and gained the National Championship in 1973 and again in 1975. She made the 1972 Olympic team and participated in both the 1970 and 1974 World Games.

Nancy terms all the international competition as inspirational. "Everytime we see the Russians, we want to work harder and build up our gymnastics in Canada." But she does admit that the Canadian team suffers from nerves and reacts unfavourably under pressure. "We're good, but internationally, we always blow something."

Personally, her biggest problem as an athlete is building up her ego. "You have to really like yourself and think you're great to do well. It sounds terrible doesn't it?" But it's the group spirit which often solves the problem for Nancy and en-

courages her to push harder.
"We all need help and inspiration, whether we're competing for ourselves or for Canada. Lise, Teresa and I always help each other. We've been together a long time.'

THE HARD PART

For all the missed social activities, discipline, training and emotional pressure, one gets the impression that it is really the dieting which is the hard part. The girls each have a specific weight they must maintain while training and during competition. Unlike most other athletes, gymnasts are judged

and given points for physical carriage and appearance. "We're always being weighed in and weighed out and the coach watches us like a hawk." Nancy sums it up nicely, "It's just terrible!"

One consolation the girls have in their Olympic battle is the government aid they receive. "The money's really helped," says Teresa, "it's just one less thing to worry about."

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

As Olympic hopefuls and university students, the girls each receive a basic \$1,800 grant from the Canadian government educational expenses. "But you have to show that you're genuinely aiming for the top and are seriously loval to Canada."

This time, the Canadian Olympic Association is also running a training support programme which contributes another \$300 for various incidental expenses like therapy and medical bills.

Thanks to the combined efforts of various local businessmen, the girls were also able to work this summer for the first time in their lives. The programmes enabled athletes to work whenever they had time out from their busy training schedules. Most of the time, the girls only worked a couple of hours a day, but

The athletic aid programmes set up by the government point to a growing awareness of the importance of athletic development in this country. Lise Arsenault though, remains critical.

The government helps when you reach Olympic calibre, but all the years of training before then are neglected. Other countries really take care of their athletes. Here, social attitudes are strange. People don't understand why we're training so hard. Elsewhere, striving for perfection is an athlete's whole life, here, it's just a hobby.'

OUTSPOKEN

Lise, clearly the most outspoken of the three gymnasts, is a fourth year student in a programme which combines psychology with physical education. Unlike Teresa and Nancy, Lise carries a full course load.

Folprecht describes Lise as the perfectionist and Lise herself admits that one of her biggest problems is her desire to do her best at everything. "The result is that she's up and down a lot," says Marie. "She wants to keep too busy. She wants to keep up with everything. In competition, she thinks too much about things."

Lise was Ontario Champion in 1974 and Quebec Champion for a number of years. She brought home a Bronze medal from the 1971 Pan American Games, participated in the Munich Olympics and the World Games of 1970 and 1974.

Although Lise is only 20, she gives the impression of being older and takes the business of Olympic competition quite seriously. As a youngster, she tried her hand at a variety of sports but liked the "challenge" of gymnastics best. In 1968, she participated in her first international competition in Cuba, as a junior. She knew then she wanted to make the Olympic team. Three years ago, Lise came to

Toronto from her native Montreal to train with the Olympic team. Like Nancy and Teresa, it's no accident that she enrolled at York. "There are a lot of people at York involved in gymnastics," says Lise. "It's a convenient place to be.'

Dr. Bryce Taylor, Chairman of the York Physical Education Department, is also the president of the Canadian Gymnastics Federation. Carol Ann Letheren, another faculty for eight years now", and Nancy member, is the technical director says her plan has always been to for the CGF and an international

... York girls in search of gold

As one of the few French-Canadian gymnasts of Olympic calibre, Lise's problems are quite different from those of the Mc-Donnells. Quebecois promoters and publicity-seekers constantly seek her out

"There's too much pressure on Lise to do well," says Nancy. "They consider her their little French girl."

MORAL SUPPORT

The burden of an athletic career is lightened by the moral support Lise has received from her family.

"When I was younger, I'd go through so many leotards that my mother finally started making them to save money. People liked them so much that she ended up creating her own line and marketing them." Lise adds, "many times, if it wasn't for my parents, I'd have quit."

Her parents have recently moved to Africa where her father works for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

At York, Lise finds making and keeping friends extremely difficult. "Many of my peers don't un-derstand all the training, and because of my career, I demand a lot from the few friends I have. I sense that many people treat me differently because they want to say they know an Olympic athlete.

"Because of all the sacrifices involved, I think my values now are much higher than other people's my age. I just hate to watch young people sit and vegetate and then ask me where I find the time to do everything. You have to work for anything you get."

And working the girls are. It's their last chance. After the 1976 Olympics, all three gymnasts are quitting. Lise would like to remain in Montreal and take up physiotherapy. Theresa says simply, "I've been on the national team finish with the '76 Olympics.

But these plans to end competition are not dampening their spirit. Lise sums it up - "There are very few Olympic athletes who can close their careers with a showing in their own country and for me its doubly important because I come from Montreal. There's 'Olympic-mania' in the air this year. We really want to do well for Canada. How can we top that?"

Would the gymasts ever consider cashing in their sport after the '76 Olympics? "Well, as amateurs, we've had to turn down any promotional jobs that come up. says Lise. "I'd probably take them if they came up again, but not seriously. It's not secure enough. I'd enjoy it and they would be great, but

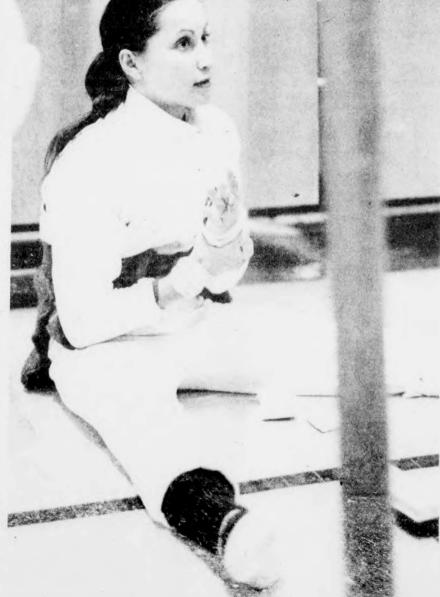
nothing long-term." Nancy admits money from promotion would certainly help her get through school and sister Teresa thinks it's "a good idea - not only to give me something back for all the training, but to give gymnastics more exposure. I wouldn't do it just for the money, though," she admits.

NORMAL LIFE

So while York students continue attending classes and doing those things students do, Nancy, Teresa and Lise continue their energetic training for Montreal this summer. But it doesn't stop here. Next month, Teresa and Nancy head for Japan for an invitational while Lise will represent Canada at the Milk Meet on November 4, at Maple Leaf

"The girls don't have a normal life" says coach Folprecht. "After these games, they want to start living like everybody else. Right now, it's just gymnastics and studies. They want to get working, getting boyfriends and going to par-

Now, is that too much to ask?



Lise Arsenault pauses during training

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MORE INFORMATION LATER! DON'T MISS IT!!

MICHELINA TRIGIANI

Every morning, like thousands of other York students, Teresa Mc-Donnell gets up early to make that nine o'clock class. To fellow classmates and other people who pass her way daily, she seems any ordinary student.

But when her last class ends at 2 p.m., Teresa heads for the Winstonettes Club along with sister Nancy and Lise Arsenault. Here the trio trains vigourously until 8 p.m. every night, six days a week and it doesn't stop there. At 8 p.m., the girls make their way to the Fitness Institute where they go through extra conditioning, strength-building

fitness nuts? Not really. The McDonnells and Arsenault are gymnasts. They are ranked among the top five in the country.

exercises and saunas. Health and

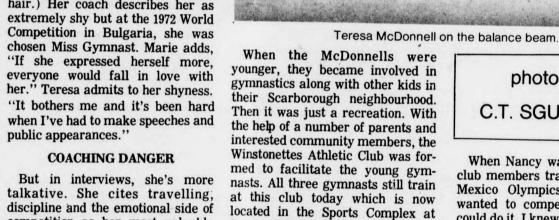
This month, the three gymnasts passed up the Pan American Games in Mexico City. They couldn't interrupt their training schedule. They want to make the Canadian Olympic Gymnastics Team and that's hard work.

THREE TRIALS

To make the team, the girls have to survive three trials. At present, there are about 18 gymnasts hoping to compete in Montreal in '76. There were over 35 original competitors. The first trial happens in Ottawa this December. At each trial, names are knocked off the list until only the top six gymnasts remain. Marie Folprecht, one of the girls' coaches and a former York instructor says there's no question that the girls will make the team. "It's Montreal that's making them nervous," she experiences.

second day of Olympic competition. great."

ADMISSION \$1.00



gymnastics along with other kids in their Scarborough neighbourhood. Then it was just a recreation. With the help of a number of parents and interested community members, the Winstonettes Athletic Club was formed to facilitate the young gymnasts. All three gymnasts still train at this club today which is now located in the Sports Complex at Seneca College.

Teresa's sister Nancy, a lively 20 year-old, second year student is still caught up in the excitement of Olympic competition. She admits she has little time to spare but loves

"I wouldn't know what to do with myself if not for gymnastics.



Left to right: Lise Arsenault, Teresa McDonnell, Nancy McDonnell.